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KIDNAPPED

BY Robert Louis Stevenson

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1850. An industrious person, he carried two books with him always: one to read and one in which to write.

His imagination for a story was sparked often by simple clues. *Treasure Island*, for example, was reputedly inspired by a treasure map and a twelve-year-old boy. Many of the adventures are similar to ones Stevenson experienced as a child.

Stevenson was interested not only in buried treasure, pirates, and sea adventure, but also in human psychology. His fascination with the conflict of good and evil in man prompted him to write *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Partially because of his Calvinist upbringing, he thought that man was always suppressing his evil nature. This nature, so long held back, breaks loose violently in the character of Mr. Hyde.

Stevenson was a collector of ideas. Often he borrowed expressions or thoughts from other writers, but his own style was unmistakable. He travelled extensively, married an American, and retreated for health reasons to the South Sea Islands. There, in 1894, he died of tuberculosis, but not until he had established himself as the "tusitala" or "the teller of tales" to the natives.

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KIDNAPPED

by ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Nov
~~Dec~~: 1977

EGGENDEAN, SCOTLAND: IT WAS A MORNING EARLY IN JUNE OF 1751 WHEN I TOOK THE KEY OUT THE DOOR OF MY FATHER'S HOUSE FOR THE VERY LAST TIME...

... AND LEFT TO FIND MY FORTUNE IN THE WORLD

BEYOND THE GARDEN GATE I WAS MET BY MR. CAMPBELL, THE VILLAGE MINISTER...

MY CONDOLENCES AGAIN, DAVIE LAD, ON YOUR FATHER'S DEATH. I SEE YOU ARE LEAVING EGGENDEAN. HAVE YOU A DESTINATION IN MIND?

IF I KNEW WHERE MY FORTUNE LAY, MR. CAMPBELL, I WOULD TELL YOU CANDIDLY ... BUT I DO NOT.

VERY WELL, DAVIE, THEN I SHALL TELL YOU OF YOUR FORTUNE -- AS FAR AS I MAY.

YOUR FATHER, WHEN HE WAS AILING, GAVE INTO MY CHARGE THIS LETTER... WHICH HE SAID WAS YOUR INHERITANCE.

THANK YOU, SIR.

To the Hands of
Ebenezer Balfour Esq. of Shaws
in his House of Shaws These will be
delivered by my Son,
David Balfour

THE HOUSE OF SHAWS! BUT WHAT HAD MY POOR FATHER TO DO WITH THE GRAND HOUSE OF SHAWS, MR. CAMPBELL?

GRAND AT ONE TIME, DAVIE LAD, BUT NOW AN ANCIENT HOUSE IN ITS LATTER DAYS OF DECAY. AS FOR YOUR FATHER, WHO CAN SAY FOR CERTAIN?

BUT THE NAME OF THAT FAMILY, YOUNG DAVID BALFOUR, IS THE NAME YOU BEAR -- BALFOUR OF SHAWS.

MY HEART WAS **BEATING HARD** AT THIS GREAT PROSPECT SUDDENLY OPENED TO THE SON OF A POOR COUNTRY SCHOOLMASTER IN THE FOREST OF ETTRICK. AND YET I WAS **UNCERTAIN.**

MR. CAMPBELL, IF YOU WERE IN MY SHOES, WOULD **YOU** GO?

OF A CERTAINTY, THAT I **WOULD,** DAVIE LAD-- AND WITHOUT A **PAUSE.**

AND SO, AFTER A LAST LOOK DOWN INTO THE CHURCHYARD WHERE MY MOTHER AND FATHER LAY, I STRODE UP THE HILL AND THROUGH THE HEATHER AWAY FROM **ESSENDEAN.** TWO DAYS LATER, MY JOURNEY FOUND ME IN **CRAMOND.**

GREETINGS. HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE **HOUSE OF SHAWS?**

IF YE'LL TAKE A WORD OF ADVICE FROM **ME,** YE'LL STAY CLEAR OF THE SHAWS.

THE MAN'S REPLY HAD LEFT ME GREATLY **DISTURBED,** AND WHEN I NEXT CAME UPON A **BARBER...**

TELL ME QUITE **PLAINLY,** SIR-- WHAT KIND OF A MAN IS **MR. BALFOUR OF THE SHAWS?**

HOOT, HOOT, HOOT-- **NAE** KIND OF A MAN **AT ALL!**

I CANNOT DESCRIBE THE BLOW THESE REACTIONS DEALT TO MY ILLUSIONS. THE MORE **INDISTINCT** THE ACCUSATIONS WERE, THE LESS I **LIKED** THEM. AT **SUNDOWN,** I APPROACHED A STOUT, SOUR-LOOKING WOMAN...

PERHAPS SHE COULD **SHED** FURTHER LIGHT ON THIS AFFAIR.

CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE TO FIND THE **HOUSE OF SHAWS?**

THAT IS THE HOUSE OF **SHAWS!**

THAT?! THAT HEAP OF **RUINS** IS THE **HOUSE OF SHAWS--?!**

AYE, THAT IS THE HOUSE -- BLOOD BUILT IT; BLOOD STOPPED THE BUILDING OF IT; AND BLOOD SHALL BRING IT DOWN!

I SPIT ON ITS GROUND AND CURSE ITS EVERY STONE!

BLACK BE ITS FALL -- MARK MY WORDS! AND IF YE MUST SEE ITS LAIRD,* TELL HIM WHAT YE'VE HEARD -- BLACK, BLACK BE ITS FALL!

*LORD -- ARCHIE.

THE CLOSER I CAME TO THE HOUSE, THE MORE I REALIZED THAT ITS CRUMBLING APPEARANCE WAS HEIGHTENED BY THE FACT THAT ITS CONSTRUCTION HAD NEVER BEEN COMPLETED...

HALLOA! OPEN UP!!

MY CRIES AND KNOCKING WERE GREETED WITH DEAD SILENCE, AS DEAD AS THE HOUSE ITSELF SEEMED...

THEN, QUITE SUDDENLY, A MEAN, STOOPING, NARROW-SHOULDERED, CLAY-FACED CREATURE APPEARED AT THE WINDOW... HOLDING A BLUNDERBUSS POINTED AT MY HEART.

I HAVE A LETTER FOR MR. EBENEZER BALFOUR OF SHAWS. IS HE HERE -- ?

A LETTER -- ? WELL, YE CAN JUST PUT IT DOWN ON THE DOOR-STEP...

... AND BE OFF WITH YE.

IT'S LOADED.

I WILL DO **NO SUCH THING!** I WILL DELIVER THIS LETTER INTO MR. BALFOUR'S HANDS **PERSONALLY**-- AS IT WAS **MEANT** I SHOULD DO.

IT IS A LETTER OF **INTRODUCTION.**

INTRODUCTION--? AND WHO **ARE** YE, THEN?

THEY CALL ME **DAVID BALFOUR.**

THEN IS YOUR FATHER **DEAD?** AYE, HE **MUST** BE DEAD-- AND THAT'S WHAT BRINGS YE TO MY **DOOR** IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT...

WELL, I SUPPOSE I'LL HAVE TO **LET YE IN.**

INTO THE **KITCHEN** WITH YE-- AND **TOUCH NOT A THING!**

I THINK THE KITCHEN MUST HAVE BEEN THE BAREST ROOM I HAD EVER LAID MY **EYES** ON... BUT AT LEAST, THERE WAS A **FIRE...**

GIVE ME **ALEXANDER'S LETTER!**

YOU KNOW MY FATHER'S **NAME--?**

MY COURAGE HAD WON OUT THE SITUATION, AND WITH SOME SATISFACTION, I ENTERERED INTO THE VAST **GLOOM...**

IT WOULD BE STRANGE INDEED IF I DID **NOT** KNOW HIS NAME -- FOR HE WAS MY **BORN BROTHER.**

AND FOR AS LITTLE AS YE SEEM TO CARE FOR EITHER **ME** OR MY **HOUSE,** I AM YOUR **BORN UNCLE.**

THEN **HE** WAS EBENEZER BALFOUR OF SHAWS! HAD I BEEN A FEW YEARS YOUNGER, I WOULD HAVE BURST OUT IN TEARS OF **SHAME** OVER MY LACK OF RESPECT.

THEN, STOOPING OVER THE **FIRE,** MY UNCLE OPENED THE LETTER AND READ IT OVER AND OVER AGAIN...

DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S **IN** THIS LETTER?

YOU SAW FOR **YOURSELF,** SIR, THAT THE **SEAL** HAD NOT BEEN **BROKEN.**

MY ANSWER SEEMED TO **SATISFY** HIM, FOR HE FELL INTO A THOUGHTFUL **SILENCE.** THEN...

HE WAS A **SECRET** MAN, YOUR FATHER ALEXANDER -- A SECRET, **SILENT** MAN. I WAGER HE SPOKE **LITTLE** OF ME...?

I CONFESS, SIR, THAT I NEVER EVEN **KNEW** -- UNTIL YOU JUST TOLD ME **YOURSELF** -- THAT HE **HAD** ANY BROTHER.

WELL, THINK OF **THAT** -- NOT EVEN A **MENTION** OF THE SHAWS, EH? SUCH A MAN MY BROTHER WAS!

I THINK WE'LL GET ALONG JUST **FINE,** LAD -- NOW COME ALONG TO YOUR **BED.**

TO MY SURPRISE HE LIT NO **LAMP** OR **CANDLE,** BUT SET FORTH INTO THE **DARK PASSAGE,** GROPING HIS WAY...

CAN WE NOT HAVE A **LIGHT,** UNCLE EBENEZER?

HOOT-TOOT, THERE'S A FINE **MOON** TO SEE BY.

BUT THERE WAS NEITHER MOON NOR STAR, AND IT WAS **DARK AS THE PIT.** I CONCLUDED THAT MY UNCLE WAS SOMEWHAT... **MISERLY.**

AND WHEN HE HAD LED ME INTO MY NEW **BEDROOM**...

LIGHTS IN A HOUSE IS A THING I DO NOT **AGREE** WITH -- I'LL HAVE NO **FIRES** STARTING **HERE.**

GOOD **NIGHT** TO YE.

AND BEFORE I COULD **PROTEST,** THE DOOR WAS SWUNG SHUT AND THERE CAME THE SOUND OF THE **LOCK** FROM OUTSIDE. I DID NOT KNOW WHETHER TO LAUGH OR **CRY**...

THE ROOM WAS AS COLD AS A WELL, DAMP AND **DRAFTY.**

SINCE THE BED WAS SOGGY, I SLEPT ON MY OWN BEDROLL, AND WITH THE FIRST PEEP OF **DAY** I OPENED MY EYES TO FIND MYSELF IN A CHAMBER WHICH MIGHT ONCE HAVE BEEN QUITE **PLEASANT**--

-- BUT TO WHICH THE DAMP, DIRT, MICE AND SPIDERS HAD DONE THEIR **WORST** SINCE THEN.

SO MANY OF THE WINDOWS WERE BROKEN THAT I SUSPECTED MY UNCLE MUST HAVE AT ONE TIME STOOD A **SIEGE** AGAINST HIS **INDIGNANT NEIGHBORS**... FOR WHAT REASONS I STILL COULD NOT **UNDERSTAND.**

UNCLE EBENEZER! OPEN THE **DOOR!**

HE WAS A STRANGE, **GRUFF** OLD MAN, BUT THAT WAS HARDLY REASON ENOUGH TO INSPIRE **HATE.** I WAS STILL **THINKING** ON THIS AS I HURRIED THROUGH A MEAGER **BREAKFAST**...

DAVIE, I MEAN TO DO **RIGHT** BY YOU... BUT WHILE I AM THINKING OF THE MATTER AND DECIDING THE **PROPER COURSE** FOR YOUR FUTURE, I WANT YE TO **SPEAK NOT A WORD TO ANYONE** ABOUT OUR AFFAIRS HERE.

FOR IF YE **DO,** I'LL SHOW YE RIGHT TO MY **DOOR.**

I'VE NO REASON TO SUPPOSE YOU MEAN ANYTHING BUT **GOOD** FOR ME. STILL, IF YOU WANT TO SHOW ME YOUR **DOOR**, I'LL WALK RIGHT **THROUGH** IT.

NO, NO, I DIDN'T MEAN **THAT**, DAVIE LAD -- I JUST DON'T WANT ANY **GOSSIP** ABOUT OUR GOOD **FAMILY NAME**. WHAT'S MINE IS **YOURS**, LAD, AND WHAT'S YOURS IS **MINE**.

SOMEWHAT UNSETTLED BY THE EXCHANGE, I LEFT THE KITCHEN SEEKING TO OCCUPY MYSELF WITH MORE **PLEASANT** PURSUITS...

To my brother Ebenezer on his fifth birthday
Alexander

THE INSCRIPTION ON THE FLY-LEAF **PUZZLED** ME, AND REKINDLED THE **DISTRUST** I HAD HOPED TO PUT ASIDE.

IF MY FATHER WAS THE **YOUNGER** BROTHER, HE MUST HAVE MADE AN **ERROR** -- EITHER **THAT**, OR HE COULD WRITE IN THIS EXCELLENT MANLY HAND BEFORE HE WAS EVEN **FIVE**.

I COULD NOT LET THE MYSTERY GO **UNSOLVED**...

UNCLE, WAS MY FATHER **QUICK AT HIS BOOK** AS A LAD?

ALEXANDER? **NO** -- I WAS **FAR** QUICKER **MYSELF**. I COULD READ AS SOON AS **HE** COULD.

THIS PUZZLED ME EVEN **MORE**.

WERE YOU **TWINS**, THEN, IF --

WHAT MAKES YE ASK **THAT**--? WHAT ARE YE TRYING TO **FIND OUT**?

TAKE YOUR HAND FROM MY JACKET. THIS IS NO WAY TO BEHAVE.

I... I'M SORRY, DAVID. BUT YE SHOULD NOT SPEAK TO ME ABOUT YOUR FATHER. THAT'S WHERE THE MISTAKE IS -- HE WAS ALL THE BROTHER I EVER HAD.

THE ABRUPT CHANGE WENT SO FAR BEYOND MY COMPREHENSION THAT I FELT BOTH FEAR AND HOPE. WAS MY UNCLE INSANE, AND PERHAPS, DANGEROUS...?

OR WAS HE TELLING THE TRUTH WHEN HE PROFESSED SUCH A DEEP AND SENSITIVE LOVE FOR MY FATHER? I COULD NOT DECIDE...

...BUT THAT NIGHT, AS WE ATE SUPPER IN WARY SILENCE, I FELT THAT FOR SOME UNKNOWN REASON HE FEARED ME. WHY, I COULD NOT SAY.

IT WAS NOT UNTIL AFTER THE UNEASY MEAL WAS FINISHED THAT EBENEZER FINALLY BROKE THE SILENCE...

DAVIE, I'VE BEEN THINKING... THERE'S A WEE BIT OF MONEY I'VE BEEN KEEPING FOR YE. I PROMISED YOUR FATHER BEFORE YE WERE BORN THAT I WOULD GIVE IT TO YE.

OF COURSE, I DID NOT BELIEVE HIM --

-- BUT WHEN HE PERSISTED WITH THE QUEER GAME...

FORTY POUNDS IS THE SUM -- AND I'VE KEPT IT HIDDEN SEPARATE FROM ALL THE REST. IF YE'LL STEP OUTSIDE A MINUTE...

I'LL FETCH IT AND CALL YE BACK...

...I DECIDED TO PLAY ALONG AND SEE JUST WHAT SORT OF SCHEME HE WAS ABOUT...

LOOKS LIKE A NASTY STORM IS BREWING...

ALL RIGHT DAVIE -- YE CAN COME BACK IN NOW.

WHEN I REENTERED, TO MY GREAT SURPRISE, EBENEZER HELD UP A BAG OF COINS...

HERE, DAVIE -- THIS'LL SHOW YE! I MAYBE A STRANGE MAN AND NONE TOO GOOD WITH STRANGERS, BUT MY WORD IS MY BOND AND HERE'S THE PROOF!

AND BY EXACT COUNT, HE DEALT OUT FORTY POUNDS. KNOWING HOW MISERLY HE WAS, I WAS STRUCK DUMB BY THIS SUDDEN GENEROSITY... AND COULD FIND NO WORDS TO THANK HIM.

STILL, I WAS NOT QUITE CONVINCED OF THIS APPARENT CHANGE OF HEART, AND WONDERED WHAT WOULD COME NEXT...

WHATEVER IT WAS TO BE, IT CAME QUICKLY...

NOW, SEE HERE, DAVIE, I WANT NO THANKS. IT'S A PLEASURE FOR ME TO DO RIGHT BY MY BROTHER'S SON -- BUT I DO EXPECT A LITTLE SOMETHING IN RETURN.

VERY WELL, UNCLE -- I'M READY TO PROVE MY GRATITUDE, IN ANY REASONABLE DEGREE.

GOOD. HERE'S THE KEY TO THE STAIR-TOWER AT THE FAR END OF THE HOUSE. YE CAN ONLY GET INTO IT FROM THE OUTSIDE, SINCE THAT END OF THE HOUSE WAS NEVER FINISHED.

I WANT YE TO BRING DOWN THE CHEST THAT'S UP AT THE TOP OF THE TOWER.

I FELT A BIT OF RELUCTANCE AND SUSPICION...

BUT IT SEEMED HARMLESS ENOUGH...

VERY WELL. CAN I HAVE A LIGHT, THEN?

NO -- I TOLD YE, NO LIGHTS IN MY HOUSE.

WELL, ARE THE STAIRS GOOD?

AYE, THEY'RE GRAND UNDERFOOT -- BUT KEEP TO THE WALL FOR THERE'S NO BANNISTERS.

AND SO, OUT INTO THE NIGHT I WENT, AS THE WIND MOANED IN THE DISTANCE AND THE SKY SHOWED BLACKER THAN EVER...

I HAD HOPED TO COMPLETE MY TASK BEFORE THE **STORM** BROKE, BUT I HAD JUST TURNED THE KEY IN THE TOWER DOOR WHEN THE WHOLE SKY LIGHTED UP WITH **WILDFIRE...**

HEH HEH HEH...

IT WAS SO DARK INSIDE, IT SEEMED A PERSON COULD SCARCELY **BREATHE.** I GROPED AHEAD UNTIL MY FOOT STRUCK THE **STAIRCASE...**

...AND, MINDING MY UNCLE'S WARNING ABOUT THE **BANNISTERS,** I KEPT CLOSE TO THE **WALL** SIDE AND FELT MY WAY IN THE PITCH DARKNESS WITH A **POUNDING HEART...**

THE HOUSE OF SHAWS STOOD FIVE FULL STORIES **HIGH.** AS I ADVANCED HIGHER INTO THE DARKNESS, I WAS AWARE OF THE CURIOUS **CHANGE** IN THE TOWER...

IT SEEMS TO GROW **AIRIER...** AND THERE IS A LITTLE MORE **LIGHT** AHEAD, I THINK...

I WAS **WONDERING** ON THIS, MOUNTING EVER **HIGHER,** WHEN...

-- A SECOND FLASH OF THE SUMMER LIGHTNING FULLY LIT THE SCENE. IF I DID NOT CRY OUT, IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE FEAR HAD SEIZED ME BY THE THROAT.

ONE MORE STEP... WOULD HAVE SENT ME CRASHING TO THE FLOOR!

SO THIS WAS THE GRAND STAIR! I LOOKED DOWN AND A GUST OF ANGRY COURAGE FILLED MY HEART. MY UNCLE HAD SENT ME HERE TO RUN GREAT RISKS, INDEED, AND PERHAPS TO DIE...

I SWORE I WOULD SETTLE THAT "PERHAPS" IF I HAD TO BREAK MY NECK TO DO SO-- AND, VERY CAUTIOUSLY, I STARTED THE LONG PERILOUS CLIMB DOWNWARD.

MY BODY SLICK WITH SWEAT, LASHED BY THE RAIN, I TUCKED MY HEAD AWAY FROM THE STORM AND CRAWLED EVER DOWNWARD THROUGH ANGER AND FEAR...

BUT I KNEW WHAT I WANTED NOW, AND DREW STRENGTH FROM IT.

REACHING GROUND AT LAST, I CREPT BACK TO FIND MY UNCLE POISED IN THE DOORWAY, HIS HEAD COCKED TO THE SIDE...

HE'S WAITING—LISTENING FOR THE SOUND OF MY FALL!!

THEN, AS A GREAT THUNDER BURST FROM THE SKIES MY UNCLE WAS SEIZED BY A PANIC WHICH SENT HIM SCURRYING BACK INTO THE HOUSE...

WHETHER HE THOUGHT THE CRASH TO BE THE SOUND OF MY FALL OR GOD'S VOICE DENOUNCING HIS MURDER, I COULD NOT DETERMINE...

CRACK

CHOOM

I FOLLOWED AS SOFTLY AS I COULD, AND SAW HIM REACHING FOR A BOTTLE OF DRINK AS HE MOANED AND SHUDDERED IN HIS FRIGHT...

I STEPPED FORWARD IN SILENCE, AND--

HAH!!

AAIIEEEE

D-DAVE... YE ARE ALIVE? N-NOT A... G-- GHOST...?

I'M ALIVE, NO THANKS TO YOU. NOW TELL ME WHY--

BUT BEFORE I COULD QUESTION HIM FURTHER, HE SLUMPED BACK INTO A DEAD FAINT...

THUS, I DECIDED TO ARM MYSELF BEFORE HE SHOULD REGAIN HIS SENSES AND THE ABILITY TO DEVISE FURTHER EVIL...

IN THE CUPBOARD I FOUND A RUSTY, UGLY-LOOKING HIGHLAND DIRK WITHOUT ITS SCABBARD. THIS I CONCEALED INSIDE MY WAISTCOAT...

... BEFORE DASHING A BUCKET OF WATER INTO HIS FACE.

COME, COME --SIT UP!

WH-WHAT..?

WHY DID YOU TRY TO KILL ME?

I... I'LL TELL YE IN THE MORNING, DAVIE, AS SURE AS DEATH I WILL! BUT NOT NOW-- IT'S MY HEART-- I NEED REST, DAVIE... I'M BEGGING YE...!

AND SO WEAK WAS HIS APPEARANCE THAT I COULD DO NOTHING BUT CONSENT...

I LOCKED HIM INTO HIS ROOM, HOWEVER, AND POCKETED THE KEY...

... CONTEMPLATING A BLAZE IN THE FIREPLACE THAT NIGHT SUCH AS THE HOUSE HAD NOT KNOWN FOR MANY A LONG YEAR.

WHEN I HAD GIVEN MY PR'SONER HIS LIBERTY IN THE MORNING...

WELL, SIR, YOU TOCK ME FOR A RAW CHILD WITH NO MORE WIT OR COURAGE THAN A PORRIDGE STICK-- AND I TOOK YOU FOR A GOOD MAN, OR AT LEAST NO WORSE THAN OTHERS.

IT SEEMS WE WERE BOTH WRONG. WHAT CAUSE HAVE YOU TO ATTEMPT MY MURDER?

WELL, DAVIE... I... I LIKE MY BIT OF FUN... IT WAS JUST A JEST...

A JEST--?! IF THAT'S WHAT YOU CALL A--

TOK TOK TOK

SIT RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE, UNCLE EBENEZER.

WHAT CHEER HAVE YE, MATE? I'VE BROUGHT A LETTER FROM MY CAPTAIN OLD NEASY-OASY TO MR. BALFOUR.

COME ON IN WITH IT, THEN.

AS THE CABIN BOY FELL GREEDILY ON THE REMAINS OF OUR BREAK-FAST, MY UNCLE READ THE LETTER AND SAT THINKING FOR A LONG WHILE. I SENSED A RETURN OF HIS FORMER SPIRITS...

... AND INDEED, QUITE ABRUPTLY AND WITH AN AIR OF GREAT LIVELINESS, HE LEANED FORWARD...

READ THIS, DAVIE!

The Hawse Inn, at the Queen's Ferry

Sir:

I lie here with my hawser up, and send my cabin boy to inform you have any further commands for overseas, today will be the last occasion.

Your humble servant,
Capt Elias Thomson

AGAIN I WAS FACED WITH A **DECISION** -- DID MY UNCLE **WELCOME** THIS INTERRUPTION OF HIS EXPLANATION, OR HAD I JUDGED HIM **WRONGLY**?

RANKEILLOR--?

YOU SEE, DAVIE, I HAVE A **VENTURE** WITH THIS CAPTAIN OF THE TRADING BRIG "**COVENANT**." NOW IF WE COULD WALK OVER TO THE **HAWES INN** WHERE I MUST SIGN SOME **PAPERS**, WE COULD THEN JOG OVER TO THE **LAWYER**, MR. RANKEILLOR...

AYE -- YE BE UNWILLING TO BELIEVE **MY** EXPLANATION OF LAST NIGHT, BUT YE'LL BELIEVE **RANKEILLOR**. HE'S HIGHLY **RESPECTED** AND HE KNEW YOUR **FATHER**.

VERY WELL, LET US GO TO THE **FERRY** THEN.

QUITE **TRUTHFULLY**, MY DECISION WAS FORMED ON MORE THAN A DESIRE TO LEARN ABOUT MY **UNCLE**. I HAD LIVED ALL MY LIFE IN THE **HIGHLANDS** AND, IN THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART, CRAVED A VIEW OF THE **SEA** AND **SHIPS**...

AS MY UNCLE WALKED AHEAD, I WAS CONTENT WITH THE COMPANY OF THE CABIN BOY **RANSOME**. JUDGING FROM HIS DESCRIPTION OF LIFE ABOARD THE BRIG **COVENANT**-- AS SHE WAS SO PIOUSLY CALLED -- THE SHIP WAS A **CURSE UPON THE SEAS**...

WHY, THEN, IF YOU FIND THE COVENANT SO **DISAGREEABLE**, DON'T YOU FIND A MORE **REPUTABLE** LIFE ON SHORE?

OH, THERE'S WORSE OFF THAN **ME**...

IT'S TRUE THAT THE CAPTAIN AND HIS FIRST MATE ARE **BRUTAL** MEN-- AND THEY'VE BEAT ME MORE THAN **ONCE**-- BUT AT LEAST I AIN'T ONE OF THE "**TWENTY-POUNDERS**."

...THEM THAT WE SOLD INTO **SLAVERY** IN NORTH AMERICA FOR **TWENTY POUNDS**!

PERHAPS ONE COULD FIND A LIFE WORSE THAN THAT OFFERED BY THE **COVENANT**. BUT IT SEEMED TO ME THAT ONE WOULD HAVE TO LOOK HARD TO **FIND** IT. I VOWED, THEN AND THERE, THAT **NOTHING** WOULD BRING ME ABOARD THAT FOUL SHIP...

AT LENGTH WE REACHED THE BUSTLING PORT OF **QUEEN'S FERRY**, WHENCE MY UNCLE LOST NO TIME IN SEEKING OUT THE **HAWES INN**...

INSIDE, I TOOK MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF **CAPTAIN HOSEASON**, THE MAN ALREADY MADE **INFAMOUS** IN MY EYES BY RANSOME'S TALES OF **CRUELTY**...

GLAD TO SEE YE IN **TIME**, MR. BALFOUR OF SHAWS! THE WIND'S **FAIR** AND THE TIDE NEARLY **READY**-- WE'LL SEE THE OLD BRIG OUT TO THE ISLE OF MAY BY **TONIGHT**.

SO YE'VE BROUGHT YOUR **FINAL COMMAND**, I SEE...

AH... WELL, **AYE**, BUT... CAPTAIN HOSEASON, YE KEEP YOUR ROOM HERE TOO **HOT**.

HAVING BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO THE DANK AND CHILL ATMOSPHERE OF THE HOUSE OF SHAWS, I HAD TO **AGREE** WITH MY UNCLE'S ASSESSMENT. THE ROOM **WAS** COMFORTABLY WARM AND I **LEFT** AS THE TWO MEN BEGAN DISCUSSING THEIR **BUSINESS**...

THEN AGAIN, I SUSPECT THE HEAT MAY HAVE BEEN AN **EXCUSE**.

YOU SEE, DESPITE THE **ATROCITIES** ASCRIBED TO THE BRIG AND HER CAPTAIN OF THE COVENANT I WAS NEVERTHELESS DRAWN TO THE **SIGHT** ANCHORED OFFSHORE - AGAINST THE LATE AFTERNOON **SKIES**.

INDEED, I MUST CONFESS THAT I FOUND THE VIEW... **BREATHTAKING**.

NOT SO THE CREW, HOWEVER...

A MORE **ROUGH**, AND **UN**-SAVORY LOT I HAD NEVER **SEEN**.

SOME TIME PASSED BEFORE I WAS JOINED ON THE DOCK BY MY UNCLE, RANSOME, AND THE DANGEROUS LOOKING CAPTAIN HOSEASON...

COME ABOARD MY BRIG, LAD, FOR THE HALF-HOUR BEFORE SUNSET, AND DRINK A BOWL WITH ME.

NO, THANK YOU, SIR. MY UNCLE AND I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE LAWYER RANKEILLOR.

AYE, YOUR UNCLE HAS TOLD ME AS MUCH. WE'LL SET YOU ASHORE ON THE PIER RIGHT BY RANKEILLOR'S HOUSE.

WELL, I...

I'M TRYING TO HELP YE, LAD. YE MUST WATCH OUT FOR THAT OLD FOX EBENEZER -- HE MEANS MISCHIEF TO YE. COME ABOARD UNTIL I CAN GET A WORD WITH YE.

VERY WELL, CAPTAIN HOGEAGON -- BUT ONLY FOR A FEW MINUTES.

IT IS TRUE THAT I THOUGHT I HAD FOUND A FRIEND IN THE CAPTAIN, SOMEONE WHO COULD ALERT ME TO MY UNCLE'S FURTHER SCHEMES...

... BUT IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT I LONGED -- MORE THAN ANY WORDS CAN TELL -- TO SEE THE INSIDE OF A SHIP FOR THE FIRST TIME.

ABOARD THE SHIP, I WAS AT FIRST VASTLY PLEASED BY ALL THE STRANGE, NEW SIGHTS, EVEN THOUGH I BECAME A BIT DIZZY FROM THE UNSTEADINESS OF THE DECK...

COME ALONG, LAD, AND LET ME SHOW YE THE RIGGING.

BUT THEN, FOR SOME REASON, I FELT UNEASY -- AND SUDDENLY FEARED I WAS LOST...

WHERE IS MY UNCLE -- ? WHERE IS HE ?!

AYE, LAD, THAT'S THE POINT.

I PULLED AWAY FROM HIM, IN PANIC AND RAN FOR THE BULWARKS...

SURE ENOUGH, THERE WAS THE LONGBOAT PULLING FOR THE **DOCKS**, WITH MY **UNCLE** SITTING IN THE **STERN.**

COME BACK!! HELP-- MURDER!! HELP!!

HE TURNED ROUND WHERE HE WAS SITTING, AND SHOWED ME A FACE FULL OF **CRUELTY** AND **TERROR.**

IT WAS THE LAST THING I **SAW.**

STRONG HANDS PLUCKED ME BACK AND A **THUNDERBOLT** SEEMED TO STRIKE ME. THERE WAS A GREAT FLASH OF **FIRE** IN MY **HEAD**, AND THEN **NOTHING.**

BRAKT

I AWAKENED IN **DARKNESS**, IN GREAT **PAIN**, AND BOUND HAND AND **FOOT**. I LAID THERE FOR **DAYS**, IN FEVER, OR WHAT **SEEMED** LIKE DAYS...

... FOR THERE WAS NO WAY TO MEASURE **TIME** IN THAT MISERABLE **ILL-SMELLING CAVERN** OF THE SHIP'S BOWELS.

FINALLY, IN CAME A MAN WHO IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS **MR. RIACH**, THE SHIP'S **SECOND OFFICER**, AND CONFESSED THAT IT WAS **HE** WHO HAD STRUCK ME ON THE HEAD...

BETTER **ME** THAN ONE OF THE **OTHERS**, LAD, FOR YOU'D NOW HAVE A **BROKEN** HEAD INSTEAD OF A **SORE** ONE. YOU'VE BEEN **KIDNAPPED** INTO SERVICE ON A VOYAGE TO THE **CAROLINAS.**

BUT TAKE **HEART**, FOR I'LL DO MY BEST TO GUARD YOU FROM **MR. SHUAN.**

HE UNTIED ME AND TURNED TO LEAVE...

WHO IS **MR. SHUAN?**

THE **FIRST** OFFICER, LAD-- AND A MORE **CRUEL** MAN YOU'LL NEVER **FIND.**

SO **THIS** WAS THE DESTINY TO WHICH MY WICKED UNCLE HAD CONDEMNED ME; HE WOULD **PAY** ONE DAY-- I **VOWED** IT.

MY DUTIES WERE LABORIOUS AND SOMETIMES I FEARED MY BACK WOULD **BREAK** UNDER THE STRAIN, BUT SINCE I PERFORMED THEM **WELL** I WAS SPARED THE CRUELTY I SO **FEARED**...

BUT FATE WAS NOT SO GENTLE WITH POOR **RANSOME**. ON MY THIRD NIGHT ABOARD, HIS **LIMP BODY** WAS BROUGHT BELOW...

LOOKS LIKE YE'LL BE TAKIN' OVER **RANSOME'S** DUTIES DAVID--NOW!

IT WAS NOT LONG AFTER THAT WHEN I SAW A SIGHT WHICH CHILLED ME TO THE **BONES**. THE CABIN BOY'S BODY WAS SLIPPED SILENTLY INTO THE **SEA**...

RANSOME IS... DEAD.

I SOON LEARNED THE **PARTICULARS** OF THE POOR BOY'S DEATH...

SIT DOWN, MR. SHUAN! YE **SOT--** YE **SWINE!** DO YE KNOW WHAT YE'VE **DONE** IN YOUR DRUNKEN STUPOR? YE'VE **MURDERED** THE BOY!

SERVES HIM **RIGHT!** HE BROUGHT ME A **DIRTY CUP** TO DRINK FROM!

YOU SHOULD HAVE INTERFERED **LONG AGO**, CAPTAIN! HE WAS **ALWAYS** BEATING AND ABUSING POOR RANSOME-- AND NOW IT'S **TOO LATE!**

MR. RIACH, THIS NIGHT'S DEED MUST NEVER BE **KNOWN** IN DYSART! THE BOY WENT OVERBOARD ON HIS **OWN**-- THAT'S THE **STORY** AND THAT'S WHAT YE'LL TELL WHEN **ASKED!**

I COULD SCARCELY **BELIEVE** WHAT I HAD SEEN AND HEARD! HAVING TAKEN RANSOME'S **PLACE**, WOULD I NOW BE SUBJECT TO ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH HAD BEFALLEN **HIM**... INCLUDING FOUL **MURDER**?

BAD WEATHER FOLLOWED THE COVENANT, LIKE AN ANGRY SIGN FROM ABOVE. SOME DAYS, SHE MADE BUT LITTLE PROGRESS, WHILE ON OTHER DAYS SHE WAS ACTUALLY DRIVEN BACK...

ON THE NIGHT OF THE TENTH DAY, A THICK, GHOSTLY WHITE FOG WRAPPED THE BRIG FROM ONE END TO THE OTHER...

THERE WAS NO WARNING -- NOTHING BUT A GREAT, TERRIBLE SOUND OF CRASHING AND SPLINTERING WOOD... AND CRIES... WILD BUT DEADENED BY THE DENSE SHROUD OF FOG...

PART II:

THE MAN WITH THE BELT OF GOLD

SHE'S STRUCK THE BREAKERS!

NO, MR. RIACH -- WE'VE ONLY RUN DOWN A BOAT!

AT THE RAIL, WE SAW THE CAPTAIN WAS RIGHT THE COVENANT HAD RAMMED AND STRUCK A SMALLER BOAT FROM WHICH THERE WAS ONLY ONE SURVIVOR -- A MAN WITH ENOUGH AGILITY AND UNUSUAL STRENGTH TO ESCAPE SUCH A CATASTROPHE...

ONLY IN THE ROUNDHOUSE DID I GET A CLEAR LOOK AT HIS FACE. HIS EYES HELD A KIND OF DANCING MADNESS THAT WAS BOTH ENGAGING AND ALARMING...

WELL, SIR, I AM GREATLY VEXED ABOUT MY SHIP.

THERE ARE SOME GOOD MEN GONE TO THE BOTTOM, CAPTAIN, WHO WERE WORTH MORE THAN A SCORE OF SHIPS SUCH AS YOURS.

BUT I SHALL BLAME IT ON THE FOG AND BE QUITE PLAIN WITH YOU ABOUT MY SITUATION...

I AM LOYAL TO THE DESCENDANTS OF KING JAMES II, HE WHO WAS DEPOSED BY GEORGE -- WHO NOW PRETENDS TO BE KING. IF I SHOULD FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE RED-COATED GENTRY, IT WILL GO HARD FOR ME...

IF YOU CAN TAKE ME TO MY DESTINATION, TO FRANCE, WHERE MY FELLOW LOYAL JACOBITES AWAIT ME -- I SHALL REWARD YOU HIGHLY FOR YOUR TROUBLE.

FRANCE IS OUT OF THE QUESTION, SIR, BUT I MIGHT BE ABLE TO SET YE BACK WHERE YE CAME FROM. HALF THE GOLD IN YOUR BELT AND I'M YOUR MAN.

SIR, NOT A PENNY IN THIS BELT BELONGS TO ME -- BUT I WILL GIVE YOU SIXTY GUINEAS TO SET ME BACK ON THE LINNHE LOCH OF SCOTLAND.

WELL, SIR, IF THAT'S HOW IT MUST BE-- SIXTY GUINEAS IT IS. HERE'S MY HAND ON IT.

AND HERE IS MINE.

WITH THAT, CAPTAIN HOSEASON LEFT THE ROUNDHOUSE-- RATHER HURRIEDLY I THOUGHT...

... AND I FOUND MYSELF ALONE WITH THIS STRANGE EXILED REBEL, WHO HAD RISKED HIS LIFE TO COLLECT MONEY FOR HIS CHIEF WHO HAD TAKEN REFUGE WITH THE FRENCH...

SO, YOU'RE A JACOBITE-- A FOLLOWER OF JAMES?

AYE-- AND YOU, BY YOUR LONG FACE, WILL BE ONE OF GEORGE'S WHIGS.

OH, BETWIXT AND BETWEEN.

WHICH MEANS YOU'RE NOTHING. WELL, MR. BETWIXT AND BETWEEN, THIS BOTTLE OF YOURS IS DRY. IT'S NOT EASY TO PAY SIXTY GUINEAS AND BE DENIED A DRINK ON TOP OF IT.

I'LL TAKE THE BOTTLE AND SEE IF I CAN GET THE KEY TO FILL IT.

REACHING THE CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS, I OVERHEARD A PLOT IN THE MAKING...

BUT THEY'RE KEPT IN THERE WHERE HE IS, COULDN'T WE SOMEHOW TRICK HIM TO COME OUT OF THE ROUNDHOUSE?

NO IT'S BETTER IF HE STAYS WHERE HE IS-- WHERE HE HAS LITTLE ROOM TO USE HIS SWORD. WE CAN ENGAGE HIM IN TALK, ONE MAN ON EACH SIDE, AND PIN UP HIS ARMS BEFORE--

ON SUDDEN COMPULSION, I DECIDED TO BRAVE IT OUT AS IF I HAD HEARD NOTHING...

CAPTAIN, THE GENTLEMAN IN THE ROUNDHOUSE WANTS A DRINK. WILL YOU GIVE ME THE KEY TO THE LIQUOR?

DAVID! YOU'RE OUR CHANCE TO GET THE FIREARMS! DO YOU KNOW WHERE THE PISTOLS ARE KEPT IN THE ROUNDHOUSE?

SINCE THEY HAD NEVER ACTED SO *FRIENDLY* BEFORE, I DECIDED I WAS SAFE AS LONG AS I *PLAYED ALONG*-- AND TOLD THEM THAT, SINCE CLEANING THE ROUNDHOUSE WAS ONE OF MY *DUTIES*, I DID *INDEED* KNOW WHERE THE PISTOLS WERE STORED...

YE *SEE*, DAVID-MAN, YON WILD HIGHLANDER IS A *DANGER TO THE SHIP*-- BESIDES BEING A FOE TO *KING GEORGE*. WE NEED THE FIREARMS TO TAKE HIM BY *SURPRISE*...

... AND YE MUST *GET* THEM FOR US-- BUT *CLEVERLY*, SO AS NOT TO AROUSE HIS *SUSPICIONS*.

BEAR IN MIND THAT IT'LL BE GOOD TO HAVE *FRIENDS* WHEN WE REACH *CAROLINA*, WHERE SUCH AS YOURSELF ARE OFTEN SOLD AS *SLAVES* TO THE *PLANTATION OWNERS*.

AND SEE *HERE*, IF YE HELP US, I'LL SEE THAT *YOUR* FINGERS ARE IN HIS BELT OF GOLD, AS WELL.

I LEFT WITH THE KEY TO THE *FIREARMS* AND THE FEAR OF DEATH IN MY HEART. COULD I BE PARTY TO YET *ANOTHER* MURDER?

AND IF *NOT*... WHAT COULD A SINGLE *BOY* AND A SINGLE MAN, EVEN BRAVE AS *LIONS*, DO AGAINST A *WHOLE SHIP'S CREW*?

I WAS STILL ARGUING IT BACK AND FORTH, GETTING NO CLEAR ANSWER, WHEN I ENTERED THE ROUNDHOUSE AND *BLURTED IT OUT*, SEALING MY FATE FOR GOOD...

DO YOU WANT TO BE *KILLED*, JACOBITE?

WHAT?! WHAT DO YOU *MEAN*--?

I QUICKLY RELATED THE PLOT OF *MURDER* AND *ROBBERY*...

AYE, THEY'RE *FIENDS* AND *CUTTHROATS*, ALL RIGHT-- BUT THEY HAVEN'T GOT ME *YET*! WILL YOU STAND *WITH* ME, LAD?

THAT I *WILL*! I AM NO *THIEF*, NOR YET A *MURDERER*-- I'LL STAND BY YOU!

I OPENED THE CABINET IN WHICH THE *FIREARMS* WERE STORED, STRANGELY *EXHILARATED* BY THE PROMISE OF DANGER...

STEWART IS MY NAME-- BUT *ALLAN BRECK* THEY CALL ME. WHAT'S *YOUR* NAME, LAD?

DAVID BALFOUR OF *SHAWS*.

THE PLAN OF BATTLE WAS QUICKLY CONCEIVED...

FIRST OF ALL, DAVID, HOW MANY STAND AGAINST US?

FIFTEEN.

VERY WELL -- I'LL HOLD THIS DOOR, WHERE THE MAIN BATTLE SHOULD OCCUR, WHILE YOU MAN THE WINDOW...

AND MIND YOU, DON'T FIRE TO MY SIDE UNLESS THEY GET ME DOWN. I'D RATHER HAVE TEN FOES IN FRONT OF ME THAN ONE LIKE YOU CRACKING PISTOLS AT MY BACK.

BUT WHAT OF THE DOOR BEHIND YOU? THEY MAY BREAK IT IN.

AYE, AND THAT'S PART OF YOUR WORK. STAY BY THE WINDOW, BUT IF THEY LIFT A HAND TO THE OTHER DOOR ...SHOOT. NOW WHAT ELSE HAVE WE TO GUARD?

THERE'S THE SKY-LIGHT IN THE ROOF --BUT LITTLE WE CAN DO ABOUT THAT.

FINALLY, OUR TIME OF WAITING CAME TO AN END, HAVING GROWN IMPATIENT FOR MY RETURN, THE CAPTAIN SHOWED HIS FACE IN THE DOOR...

STAND WHERE YOU ARE, VILLAIN!

A NAKED SWORD? THIS IS STRANGE PAYMENT FOR MY HOSPITALITY.

DO YOU SEE ME? I AM BORN OF KINGS; I BEAR A KING'S NAME. MY BADGE IS AN OAK. DO YOU SEE MY SWORD? IT HAS SLASHED THE HEADS OFF MORE WHIGS THAN YOU HAVE TOES ON YOUR FEET!

CALL UP YOUR VERMIN: TO YOUR BACK, SIR, AND FALL UPON US!

THE SOONER THE CLASH BEGINS, THE SOONER YOU'LL TASTE THIS STEEL IN YOUR VITALS!

I'LL REMEMBER THIS, DAVID... REMEMBER IT WELL.

AND THE SOUND OF HIS VOICE WENT THROUGH MY BLOOD LIKE ICE.

AND NOW, DAVID, LET YOUR *HAND* KEEP YOUR *HEAD* -- FOR THE GRIP IS COMING.

I DO NOT KNOW IF I WAS *AFRAID*, BUT MY HEART BEAT LIKE A *BIRD'S*, BOTH QUICK AND *LIGHTLY*, AND I WAS FILLED WITH AN *ANGER* WHICH MADE ME WANT TO SELL MY LIFE AS DEARLY AS *POSSI-BLE*...

A LITTLE LATER, THERE CAME A CLASHING OF STEEL ON THE *DECK*, BY WHICH I KNEW THEY WERE DEALING OUT THE *CUTLASSES*...

A SHARE OF THE HIGH-LANDER'S *GOLD* TO EVERY MAN WHO JOINS THE *FIGHT*!

I EXPECTED THEY WOULD ALL JOIN.

IT CAME *SUDDEN-LY* WHEN IT *DID*, WITH A RUSH OF FEET AND A ROAR OF *VOICES*...

... THEN THE SOUND OF *BLOWS* AND SOMEONE CRYING OUT AS IF *HURT*...

I LOOKED OVER MY *SHOULDER* AND SAW ALAN PAGE HIS SWORD THROUGH *MR. SHUMAN'S BODY*...

LOOK TO YOUR *WINDOW*, DAVID!

BUT BEFORE I HEEDED ALAN'S *WARNING*, I TOOK HEART IN THE FACT THAT LITTLE RANSOME'S MURDER HAD BEEN *AVENGED*...

I WAS NONE TOO SOON IN LOOKING TO MY *OWN* PART. FOUR MEN CARRYING A *BATTERING RAM*, INTENDED FOR THE OTHER DOOR, RAN PAST MY *WINDOW*...

TAKE THAT!!

BRAM BLAM!

I MUST HAVE *HIT* ONE OF THEM, FOR HE SANG OUT AND GAVE *BACK* A STEP, THE *SECOND* BALL WENT OVER THEIR *HEADS*...

...BUT THE OTHERS *STOPPED*, AS IF DISCONCERTED, AND FINALLY THREW DOWN THE BATTERING RAM AND *FLED FROM PISTOL REACH*.

FORTUNATELY, ONLY *ONE ATTACKER AT A TIME* COULD OCCUPY THE NARROW DOORWAY THAT ALAN DEFENDED FOR BOTH HIS OWN LIFE AND *MINE*...

THERE'S *ANOTHER* WHIG FOR YOU! COME ON -- COME AT ME, YOU FILTHY *SHIP-RATS!*

BRAM

BUT THE CREW SUDDENLY *BROKE OFF*, FALLING AWAY FROM US IN *RETREAT*...

I WONDERED IF IT WAS *OVER*...

I GOT AT LEAST *ONE* OF THEM, SIR...

AND I'VE SETTLED *TWO*, DAVID -- BUT IT'S STILL NOT ENOUGH *BLOOD LET*. KEEP TO YOUR *WATCH* -- THEY'LL BE *BACK* AGAIN. THIS WAS BUT A *DRINK* BEFORE OUR *MEAT*.

THEN, AS I HASTILY *RECHARGED MY PISTOLS*, I HEARD THEIR *VOICES* OUT ON THE DECK...

IT WAS *SHUAN* WHO *BUNGLED* IT, CAPTAIN!

QUIET, MAN -- HE'S ALREADY *PAID* THE PIPER! BUT THIS *NEXT* TIME, IT'S *THEM* WHO'LL PAY...

THE REST WAS ALL SOFT MUTTERS, BUT THE MEANING WAS CLEAR ENOUGH...

ALAN, THEY'VE MADE SOME PLAN--I THINK THEY'RE COMING AT US AGAIN.

IT'S WHAT WE MUST PRAY FOR, DAVID. UNLESS WE CAN GIVE THEM A GOOD DISTASTE OF US AND BE DONE WITH IT, THERE'LL BE NO SLEEP FOR US TONIGHT. BUT THIS TIME, MIND YOU, THEY'LL BE IN EARNEST.

BY THIS TIME, MY PISTOLS WERE READY AND THERE WAS NOTHING TO DO BUT LISTEN AND WAIT. SOON I BEGUN TO HEAR STEALTHY STEPS, AND THE BRUSHING OF MEN'S CLOTHES AGAINST THE ROUNDHOUSE WALL...

THE FEAR OF SHARP SWORDS--OF THE BITTER COLD STEEL--WAS SO STRONG IN ME THAT I THOUGHT I WOULD CRY OUT...

THEN I HEARD A SOFT SCUFF ON THE ROOF ABOVE ME... A SINGLE CALL ON THE SEA-PIPE THAT MUST HAVE BEEN A SIGNAL--

--FOR EVERYTHING THEN SEEMED TO HAPPEN AT ONCE. A KNOT OF MEN ABRUPTLY CRASHED THROUGH THE DOOR...

BRAM!

KREESH!

...AND AT THE SAME MOMENT, THE GLASS OF THE SKYLIGHT WAS DASHED TO A THOUSAND PIECES AS TWO MORE MEN FELL THROUGH WITH LOUD CRIES...

BEFORE THE SECOND MAN GOT TO HIS *FEET*, I HAD A *PISTOL* ON HIM... BUT AT THE *SIGHT* OF HIM, SO *ALIVE*, MY FLESH BETRAYED ME AND I COULD NO MORE PULL THAT TRIGGER THAN I COULD HAVE *FLOWN*.

BUT AS HE LUNGED UP AND *CHARGED* ME, ROARING A FOUL *OATH*, MY *COURAGE* CAME AGAIN -- OR I GREW SO *AFRAID* AS TO REACH THE *SAME END*...

BLAM

DAVID! HELP ME!

SEEING THAT ALAN WAS *SURROUNDED* AND GREATLY *OUTNUMBERED*, I SNATCHED UP A FALLEN *CUTLASS* AND RUSHED TO HIS *AID*...

HAH! THAT'S ALL I NEEDED, DAVID -- NOW LET'S SHOW THEM WHAT WE CAN DO *SIDE BY SIDE!*

IT WAS THEN THAT THE ATTACKERS *BROKE*, FALLING AGAINST ONE ANOTHER IN THEIR HASTE TO *FLEE*.

ALAN WAS LIKE A *WILD MAN* DRIVING THEM ALONG THE DECK AS A SHEEPDOG HERDS ITS *FLOCK*...

...WHILE I COULD ONLY *STARE*, IN HORROR, ON THE SHAMBLES OF DEATH I HAD HELPED TO *CREATE*.

ALAN WAS NO SOONER *OUT*, HOWEVER, THAN HE WAS *BACK* AGAIN, COMING TO ME WITH OPEN ARMS AND A *LUSTY JOY*...

DAVID, I LOVE YOU LIKE A *BROTHER*! OH, MAN, ARE WE NOT *BONNIE FIGHTERS*! I THINK WE'VE *WON*, LAD-- I THINK THEY'VE *HAD ENOUGH*!

THEN, AFTER HE HAD PASSED HIS SWORD CLEAN THROUGH EACH OF THE BODIES AND TUMBLED THEM OUT THE *DOOR*, ALAN TURNED TO ME AS I BEGAN TO SOB AND CRY LIKE A *CHILD*...

YOU'RE A *BRAVE LAD*, DAVID, AND YOU NEED NOTHING BUT *SLEEP*. YOU'VE DONE *WELL* BY ME AND I WOULDN'T *LOSE* YOU FOR ALL OF *EDINBURGH*.

GO AND *LIE DOWN*-- I'LL TAKE THE *FIRST WATCH*.

AND HOURS LATER, WHEN IT WAS *MY* TURN TO SIT WATCH...

I'LL WELCOME THE *DAYLIGHT*, THAT'S FOR *CERTAIN*. THIS HAS BEEN A... A *NIGHTMARE*.

SUNRISE FINALLY BROKE OVER THE *SEA*, AND AFTER A BREAK-FAST OF BREAD AND WINE, ALAN TOOK A DAGGER TO ONE OF THE *SILVER BUTTONS* ON HIS COAT...

I GOT THESE BUTTONS FROM MY FATHER, *DUNCAN STEWART*, AND I NOW GIVE ONE OF THEM TO *YOU*, DAVID, AS A *KEEPSAKE* OF LAST NIGHT'S WORK...

WHEREVER YOU *GO*, IF YOU SHOW THIS *BUTTON*, THE FRIENDS OF *ALAN BRECK* WILL COME TO YOUR *AID*--AS YOU CAME TO *MINE*.

HE SAID THIS AS IF HE WERE *CHARLE-MAGNE* AND COMMANDED *VAST ARMIES*. I COULD ONLY SMILE AT HIS *VANITY*, NEVER REALIZING SUCH A SMILE WOULD PROVE TO BE SMUGLY *WRONG*.

A SHORT WHILE LATER, AS *RAIN* BEGAN TO FALL, WE WERE HAILED BY *MR. RIACH* ASKING FOR A PARLEY. I CLIMBED UP THROUGH THE SHATTERED SKYLIGHT AND FACED HIM FROM THE *ROOF*...

THE CAPTAIN WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK WITH YOUR *FRIEND*, DAVID -- PERHAPS THROUGH THE *WINDOW*...

HOW DO WE KNOW HE MEANS NO *TREACHERY*?

IF HE *DID*, I'LL TELL YE THE *HONEST TRUTH*, DAVID -- WE COULD NOT GET ENOUGH MEN TO *FOLLOW* US IN TREACHERY.

SINCE RIACH SEEMED QUITE *FRIGHTENED*, AND HAD APPARENTLY HAD QUITE ENOUGH OF THE CAPTAIN'S WAYS *HIMSELF*, WE *AGREED*...

...AND SO, THE *CAPTAIN* SOON APPEARED AT THE *WINDOW*.

YE'VE MADE A SORE MESS OF MY *BRIG*, HIGHLANDER -- I HAVEN'T ENOUGH HANDS LEFT TO *SAIL* HER. THERE'S NOTHING FOR ME TO DO BUT PUT BACK INTO THE PORT OF *GLASGOW*.

NOT IF YOU DON'T WANT ALL OF GLAS-GOW *LAUGHING* AT YOU -- OVER THE BONNIE TALE OF A MAN AND A BOY WHIPPING *FIFTEEN TARRY SAILORS!*

ALAN'S REPLY STRUCK *HOME*, FOR OLD HOSEASON HAD NO WISH TO BE THE OBJECT OF *RIDICULE*...

VERY WELL... WE'RE BUT A FEW HOURS SAIL FROM *ARDNAMURCHAN* IN *WEST ARGYLLSHIRE*. FOR THE *SIXTY GUINEAS*, I'LL SET YE *THERE*.

AND *ME* RUN THE JEOPARDY OF THE *REDCOATS* TO PLEASE *YOU*? NO, SIR, YOU'LL *EARN* YOUR SIXTY GUINEAS AND SET ME DOWN WITHIN THIRTY MILES OF *MY OWN COUNTRY* -- EXCEPT IN A REGION OF THE *CAMPBELLS*.

IF I'D FARED *BETTER* ON THIS CRUISE, I'D SEE YE *GRINNING IN THE ROPE*, BUT IT'LL BE AS YE *SAY*. STILL... WE MAY YET COME UPON A *KING'S SHIP*, THROUGH NO FAULT OF *MINE*.

CAPTAIN, IF YOU SEE A *KING'S PENNANT*, IT SHALL BE YOUR DUTY TO *ESCAPE* IT... OR *DIE* WHEN I DIE.

AN SO WAS THE *TREATY SEALED*.

AS WE SAILED BACK FOR THE COAST OF SCOTLAND, I RELATED TO ALAN THE STORY OF HOW I CAME TO THE *COVENANT*. I TOLD HIM THAT THE *MINISTER* HAD GIVEN ME THE ENVELOPE ADDRESSED TO MY *UNCLE EBENEZER*, BUT WHEN I MENTIONED THAT THE MINISTER'S *NAME* WAS --

CAMPBELL--?! A CURSE UPON *ALL* MEN OF THAT *FOUL NAME!*

BUT *WHY?* MR. CAMPBELL IS A MAN YOU'D BE *PROUD* TO GIVE YOUR HAND TO...

I WOULD GIVE A CAMPBELL *NOTHING* --UNLESS IT WERE A *BULLET!* I WOULD HUNT ALL OF THAT NAME TO THEIR *DEATHS* -- AS THEY HUNTED AND HOUNDED ALL OF *MY* CLANSMEN, AND DROVE THEM FROM THE *HEATHER* --DROVE THEM AND THE DESCENDANTS OF *KING JAMES* OUT OF SCOTLAND AND INTO HIDING IN *FRANCE!*

BUT MOST OF ALL I WOULD HUNT THE CAMPBELL WHO IS "KING" GEORGE'S *FAVORITE PUPPET*--THE CAMPBELL KNOWN AS *COLIN OF GLENURE*--AND THE CAMPBELL I *REVILE* AS THE *RED FOX!*

IF YOU KNEW WHAT THE RED FOX HAS DONE TO MY *CLANSMAN*, DAVID --HOW HE HAS *OPPRESSED* THOSE OF THE SAME CLASS AS *YOURSELF*--YOU'D *SHUDDER* TO AGAIN THINK OF *YOURSELF* AS A *WHIG!*

THEN, BEFORE ALAN COULD GO ON, WE WERE INTERRUPTED BY *HOSEASON'S WILD FACE...*

HERE! COME OUT AND SEE IF YE CAN *PILOT--QUICKLY!*

IF THIS IS ONE OF YOUR *TRICKS, HOSEASON!...*

DO I LOOK LIKE TRICKS?! *BLAST* YE, HIGHLANDER--I HAVE *OTHER* THINGS TO THINK OF! MY *BRIG'S* IN *DANGER!!*

FROM HIS STRIDENT TONES AND THE TERROR ETCHED IN HIS FACE, IT WAS PLAIN THAT THE CAPTAIN WAS *MOST EARNEST...*

PART III

THE RED FOX

AND WHEN WE DASHED OUT ONTO THE VIOLENTLY PITCHING DECK, ALL FEAR OF *TREACHERY* WAS WASHED AWAY BY A FAR *GREATER* DANGER...

BEFORE US LAY THE *JAGGED* COAST, WITH THE SEA BREAKING IN FOAM ON A HULKING *REEF*.

IF I HAD KNOWN OF THESE *REEFS*, YE BLOODY HIGHLANDER, NOT EVEN *SIX-HUNDRED* GUINEAS WOULD HAVE MADE ME RISK MY BRIG IN SUCH A *STONE-YARD!*

WE'LL HAVE TO *HAUL OUR WIND*, MR RIACH--WE'RE IN FOR IT *NOW!!*

BUT EVEN AS HE SPOKE, THE TIDE *CAUGHT* THE BRIG, SNAPPING THE *WIND* FROM HER *SAILS*, AND SHE SPUN ROUND LIKE A *TOP* IN THE TURBULENCE...

THE NEXT MOMENT, AS A FRIGHTENED SAILOR SCREAMED OVER THE TUMULT, THE BRIG CRASHED ONTO THE REEF WITH TERRIBLE FORCE...

BRATCH

THE SHIP FELL APART ON ALL SIDES AROUND US, AND I RUSHED TO HELP ALAN WITH A LIFEBOAT...

WHAT COUNTRY IS THIS--?!

THE WORST POSSIBLE FOR ME --IT'S THE ISLE OF EARRAID -- A LAND OF THE CAMPBELLS!

THEN, AS THE BROKEN SHIP WAS SWEPT INTO ANOTHER ROCK, I FELT FIERCE WATER POUNDING ME WITH THE FORCE OF A HURRICANE... AND MY FEET LEFT THE DECK...

ALAN!!!

THERE WAS NO ANSWER, ONLY THE RAGING ROAR OF MADNESS, AND THE NEXT THING I KNEW... I WAS FLOUNDERING HELPLESSLY IN THE SURF...

I GRASPED A BROKEN SPAR AND CLUNG TO IT IN DESPERATION...

THEN AFTER AN HOUR OF MORTALLY SLOW KICKING AND SPLASHING, I FINALLY REACHED -- OR WAS WASHED UPON -- THE BARREN, DESERTED BEACH OF THE ISLE OF EARRAID.

BEATEN, CHOKED, AND EXHAUSTED, I CRAWLED FORWARD, MURMURING MY EVERLASTING GRATITUDE...

AT DAYBREAK, CHILLED AND WEAK, I CLIMBED A HILLTOP TO SCAN THE AREA. THE COVENANT HAD *SUNK*, GIVING NOTHING BUT *FLOTSAM* TO MY EYES...

NOR WAS THEIR ANY SIGN OF MY FORMER *ENEMIES* OR *COMPANIONS*.

I WAS *MAROONED* ON EARRAID FOR SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE I DISCOVERED IT WAS A *TIDAL ISLET*. TWICE IN EVERY TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, AT *LOW TIDE*, THE NEIGHBORING *ISLE OF MULL* COULD BE REACHED.

MULL WAS *INHABITED* AND, SAYING A PRAYER, I CROSSED THE SAND-SPIT TO ITS *SHORE*...

I LEARNED, TO MY GREAT *JOY*, THAT MY SHIPMATES HAD GOTTEN *SAFELY TO SHORE* -- AND HAD EVEN *BROKEN BREAD* WITH MY NEW ACQUAINTANCE THAT VERY *MORNING*.

WAS THERE ONE DRESSED LIKE A *GENTLEMAN* -- AND WAS HE A *HIGHLANDER*?

AYE, THE *FIRST* MAN -- THE ONE WHO CAME HERE *ALONE*. THE OTHERS WHO CAME *LATER* WORE *SAILORS'* CLOTHING.

AND *YOU* MUST BE THE LAD WITH THE *SILVER BUTTON*, EH?

WHY... YES, I AM.

THEN YOU SHALL *ALSO* HAVE A *MEAL* IN YOUR *BELLY* AND A *BED* IN WHICH TO SPEND THE *NIGHT*.

AND I HAD SECRETLY *SCORNED* ALAN'S MOST PRECIOUS BUTTON!

IN THE MORNING, THE FRIENDLY OLD COTTAGER LED ME TO A *ROAD*...

NOW, YOUR FRIEND'S *MESSAGE* TO YOU WAS TO FOLLOW THIS ROAD TO *HIS COUNTRY BY TOROWAY*.

I COULD ONLY SMILE IN PROFOUND *GRATITUDE*. IF THIS MAN WAS A *WILD HIGHLANDER*, THEN I WISHED MY *OWN* FOLK WERE A BIT WILDER. PERHAPS ALAN WAS *RIGHT* ABOUT THE FOLLY OF BEING A *WHIG*.

I WALKED THE ROAD FOR SEVERAL DAYS UNTIL I FELT I MUST BE NEARING *TORORAY*. THUS, WHEN I CAME UPON A *FERRYMAN*, I WAS CERTAIN HE WOULD BE ONE OF *ALAN'S CLANSMEN*...

I AM SEEKING *ALAN BRECK STEWART*. CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE HE MIGHT *BE*?

THE MAN YE ASK FOR IS IN *FRANCE*. I HAVE NO OTHER *KNOWLEDGE* OF HIM.

BUT WHEN I SHOWED HIM THE *SILVER BUTTON* IN THE HOLLOW OF MY *PALM*...

WELL, *WELL*! THIS IS A *DIFFERENT* MATTER. YE SHOULD HAVE *BEGUN* WITH *THIS* END OF THE STICK, LAD. I HAVE *INSTRUCTIONS* TO SEE THAT YE REACH GOOD ALAN BRECK *SAFELY*.

HE MADE HASTE TO GIVE ME MY *ROUTE*, TELLING ME TO CROSS *MORVEN* TO *AUCHARN* AND TO ASK MY WAY TO THE HOUSE OF *JAMES OF THE GLENS*. THEN HE HAD A LAST BIT OF *ADVICE*...

SPEAK TO NO ONE AND AVOID THE *WHIGS, CAMPBELLS*, AND THE *REDCOAT SOLDIERS*. IF YE SEE ANY OF THEM *COMING*, LEAVE THE ROAD AND HIDE IN THE *BRUSH*.

SEVERAL DAYS LATER, AS I WAS NEARING THE *LINNHE LOCH*, I STOPPED ON THE ROADSIDE FOR A *REST*...

WHAT'S *THAT*--? THE SOUND OF *HORSES*...!

I SCRAMBLED BACK INTO *HIDING* JUST AS THEY APPEARED ON THE *ROAD*. I DEBATED A COURSE OF *ACTION*--THEY WERE *REDCOAT SOLDIERS* AND PERHAPS *CAMPBELLS* AS WELL, AND THE FERRYMAN HAD WARNED ME *AGAINST* THEM...

...BUT I NEEDED *FURTHER DIRECTIONS* IF I WAS EVER TO FIND *ALAN* AGAIN.

BESIDES, I *WAS* STILL A WHIG, AFTER ALL...

HULLO! CAN YOU TELL ME THE WAY TO *AUCHARN*?

AND WHAT SEEK YE IN *AUCHARN*, PRAY TELL?

THE MAN WHO LIVES THERE...

THEN HE SEEKS JAMES OF THE GLENS. I LIKE IT NOT, COLIN OF GLENURE.

COLIN OF GLENURE/ I WAS NEARLY STAGGERED BY THE SOLDIER'S WORDS. IN MY HASTE, I HAD STOPPED--

--THE RED FOX!!

BRAM

AAARRRHH!! I AM DEAD--!!

IT HAD HAPPENED SO QUICKLY, AND FILLED ME WITH SUCH SHOCK, THAT I SCARCELY HAD TIME TO THINK...

UP THERE! THE MURDERER!!

THE MURDERER! I SEE HIM!!

COME BACK, YE BLOODY FOOL-- OR YE'LL DIE YOURSELF!!

BRAM BRAM

STILL NOT REALIZING WHAT POSSESSED ME OR MADE ME DO WHAT WAS SURELY THE ACTIONS OF A MADMAN OR A FOOL, I FOUND MYSELF RACING FOR THE TOP OF THE HILL--BUT NOW DUCKING THE SOLDIERS' BULLETS IN AN ATTEMPT TO SAVE MY OWN LIFE...

I LEAPED INTO THE THICKET--

--STRAIGHT INTO THE ARMS OF ALAN BRECK OF THE STEWARTS!!

YOU--!!

COME, DAVID-LAD, IT'S IN EARNEST NOW--DO AS I DO FOR YOUR LIFE.

AND WITH INFINITE CAUTION, MY HEAD STILL REELING FROM SHOCK, I FOLLOWED ALAN BRECK AS HE SWIFTLY CREPT DEEPER INTO THE WOODS...

WHEN WE WERE AT LAST SAFE, AND I HAD COME TO MY SENSES, MY MIND WAS MADE...

YOU AND I MUST NOW PART, ALAN BRECK. I LIKED YOU WELL ENOUGH, BUT YOUR WAYS CAN NEVER BE MINE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, DAVID? I WILL HARDLY PART COMPANY WITH YOU WITHOUT SOME KIND OF REASON.

YOU KNOW VERY WELL THAT MAN LYING BACK ON THE ROAD IN HIS BLOOD WAS YOUR ENEMY, THE RED FOX!

SEE HERE, MR. BALFOUR OF SHAWS, IF I WERE GOING TO KILL A MAN, IT WOULD NOT BE HERE IN MY OWN COUNTRY WHERE I WOULD ONLY BRING TROUBLE ON MY CLAN--AND I WOULD NOT DO IT WITHOUT A SWORD OR A GUN AND ONLY A FISHING ROD ON MY BACK.

I SUPPOSE THAT'S... TRUE. THEN YOU HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE MURDER, ALAN?

I SWEAR UPON THE HOLY IRON THAT I HAD NOT EVEN THOUGHT OF IT.

STILL, THAT WILL NOT KEEP THE REDCOAT SOLDIERS FROM BELIEVING I DID IT-- AND WANTING MY HEAD FOR IT. YOUR HEAD, AS WELL, DAVID, FOR THEY CAUGHT A GOOD SIGHT OF IT.

BUT EVEN THAT DIRE THOUGHT DID NOTHING TO DAMPEN THE GREAT RELIEF I FELT OVER LEARNING THAT ALAN WAS INNOCENT OF THE FOUL DEED.

FOR HIS PART, HOWEVER, ALAN COULD ONLY THINK OF *ESCAPE* --ESCAPE FROM THE PUNISHMENT OF A CRIME HE DID NOT COMMIT...

WE'LL STRIKE OUT FOR *AUCHARN*, DAVID, AND THE HOUSE OF MY *KINSMAN JAMES*--WHERE I MUST GET MY *CLOTHES* AND MY *ARMS*.

THEN WE'LL CRY "*FORTH TO FORTUNE!*" AND CAST INTO THE WIDE *HEATHER*.

ALL THAT DAY WE AVOIDED THE REDCOAT SOLDIERS OF KING GEORGE, AND BY NIGHT WE REACHED *AUCHARN* AND THE HOUSE OF *JAMES OF THE GLENS*...

JAMES MUST HAVE LOST HIS *WITS* TO BE SO *CARELESS*. IF WE WERE *SOLDIERS*, HE'D BE IN A RIGHT BONNIE *MESS* NOW.

ALAN THEN WHISTLED THREE TIMES IN *SIGNAL*...

...AND WE WENT DOWN TO *MEET* JAMES OF THE GLENS.

THIS KILLING HAS BEEN A *DREADFUL* ACCIDENT, ALAN BRECK--AND WILL ONLY BRING *TROUBLE* DOWN ON US.

HOOTS, JAMES--THE RED FOX IS FINALLY *DEAD*. BE THANKFUL FOR *THAT*.

AYE, THE VILLAIN'S *DEAD* RIGHT ENOUGH--AND *I'M* WISHING HE WAS *ALIVE* AGAIN. IT'S ALL VERY WELL TO BOAST OF HIS END *BEFOREHAND*. BUT WHO'S TO TAKE THE BLAME *AFTERWARD*?

IT'S *US* WHO'LL PAY--AND I'M A MAN WITH A *FAMILY*. YOU CAN SEE WE'RE BURYING THE *GUNS* AND *SWORDS* INTO THE *MOSS*...

THE REDCOAT SOLDIERS WILL BE SEARCHING THIS PLACE WITH *CANDLES* BEFORE THE *NIGHT* IS OUT. WE MUST HAVE OUR HOUSES IN *ORDER*, CLEAN OF ANYTHING THAT'LL *ANGER* THEM...

INDEED, THE HOUSE OF JAMES OF THE GLENS WAS NOW A *HOUSE OF FEAR*.

AND YOUR *FRENCH CLOTHES* HERE, ALAN--STRAIGHT FROM THE LAND WHERE GEORGE'S *SWORN ENEMY* HAS TAKEN REFUGE--I'M THINKING WE SHOULD BURY *THESE* AS WELL...

BURY MY *FRENCH CLOTHES*?! NOT ON YOUR *LIFE*, MAN! GIVE THEM TO ME AND I'LL BE *GONE* WITH THEM.

COME ALONG, DAVID, WE'LL OUTFIT OURSELVES IN THE HOUSE AND TAKE *OUR LEAVE*. WE CAN'T STAY HERE AND ENDANGER THE *LIVES* OF THESE GOOD FOLK WHO ARE MY *KINSMEN*.

AND WHEN WE WERE READY TO *DEPART*, JAMES OF THE GLENS GAVE US A RELUCTANT *WARNING*...

IT'S A SORE THING TO DO AND I'M *SORRY* FOR IT, ALAN, BUT I'LL HAVE TO OFFER A *REWARD* FOR YOU AND THE LAD. IF I GET THE *BLAME* FOR THIS, I'LL HAVE NO WAY OF *FENDING* FOR MYSELF AND MY *FAMILY*.

AYE, JAMES, TOMORROW THERE'LL BE A FINE RIDING OF DRAGOONS AND *RUNNING* OF *REDCOATS* AROUND HERE. SO FARE YOU *WELL*.

THUS BEGAN OUR WILD AND DESPERATE *FLIGHT INTO THE HEATHER*--A BREATHTAKING, *EXHILARATING* RUN HAUNTED BY THE DISTANT SOUNDS OF *MASSING SOLDIERS*...

...A RUN WHICH LASTED MOST OF THE NIGHT AND BROUGHT US FINALLY INTO A PRODIGIOUS *VALLEY* STREWN WITH STRANGE FORMATIONS OF ROCK AND WHERE RAN A FOAMING *RIVER*...

REDCOAT SOLDIERS, DAVID. THIS IS NO *FIT PLACE* FOR YOU AND ME--THEY WERE *BOUND* TO WATCH IT. WE'D BEST FIND US A *HIDING PLACE*...

THUS, DAYBREAK FOUND US HUNCHED DOWN WITHIN A CIRCLE OF **BOULDERS**...

THE DAY HAS CAUGHT US WHERE WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE **BEEN**, DAVID. WE LIE HERE IN **GREAT DANGER**, AND YET CANNOT **LEAVE**. GO TO YOUR **SLEEP**, LAD, AND **I'LL WATCH.**

I SLEPT, AND MY DREAMS WERE SHAPED BY THE SOUND OF **EAGLES** SCREAMING AROUND SOME FAR-OFF CLIFF...

WHEN I AWAKENED THE SOLDIERS WERE ALREADY **GONE**, AND ALAN HAD DECIDED ON A **DESPERATE COURSE**...

COME **ALONG**, DAVID -- WE'LL TRY FOR THE TOWN WHERE YOUR WICKED **UNCLE** LIVES. ONE DEATH IS AS GOOD AS **ANOTHER**...AND I DON'T FANCY THESE **BOULDERS** AS THE ONLY MARKING FOR MY **GRAVE.**

WE CROSSED THE RIVER IN **QUIET DARKNESS**, FEELING MORE LIKE FUGITIVES THAN **EVER**, AND PAUSING ONLY TO **REFRESH** OURSELVES IN THE COOL WATERS BEFORE **RESUMING** OUR FLIGHT...

A WEEK OF TERROR AND **NEAR DEATH** ON EVERY TURN PASSED BEFORE OUR EYES LIKE A DAZZLING FIRE OF ICE HAD **FEVERED** OUR **MINDS**...

...AND STILL THE SOLDIERS HUNTED AND HOUNDED US...

...AND STILL WE **THWARTED** THEM, TIME AND TIME **AGAIN.**

WE CROSSED ROCKS, MOORS, WOODS AND **HEATHERS**, HILLS AND **VALLEYS**, NEVER KNOWING WHICH SIGHT MIGHT BE OUR **LAST**...

FINALLY, WHEN IT SEEMED OUR LUCK SHOULD HAVE GIVEN OUT LONG AGO...

DO YOU SEE YON MOUNTAIN, DAVID? IF WE CAN REACH IT BEFORE MORNING, WE MAY MAKE IT TO QUEEN'S FERRY YET!

BUT ALAN, THAT WILL TAKE US DIRECTLY ACROSS THE PATH OF THOSE SOLDIERS BELOW!

I KNOW THAT, BUT IF WE'RE DRIVEN BACK TO MY COUNTRY, WE'RE DEAD MEN! SO COME ALONG, DAVID -- AND BE BRISK.

SO HELP ME, I SMILED AS I LOOKED AT THE DASHING HIGHLANDER WHO SO WELL PLAYED THE ROLE OF MADMAN. THEN, THERE WAS NOTHING TO DO BUT FOLLOW HIM...

...HOLDING MY BREATH...

...AND PRAYING EVERY STEP OF THE PERILOUS WAY.

AGAINST ALL ODDS, DAWN FOUND US ATOP THE MOUNTAIN,-FROM WHICH I LOOKED DOWN ON THE BUSTLING PORT OF QUEEN'S FERRY WHERE I HAD FIRST SEEN THE BRIG COVENANT...AND WHENCE MY JOURNEY OF ADVENTURE HAD BEGUN...

THEN WE'RE AGREED, DAVID? I'LL WAIT IN HIDING FOR YOUR SIGNAL-- WHILE YOU START THE SCHEME DOWN BELOW.

AYE, ALAN, BUT IF YOU ASK ME... IT'S MADNESS ITSELF.

PART IV

THE MYSTERY SOLVED, A KINGDOM WON

ALAN'S SCHEME WAS INDEED A *CHANCY* THING, BUT I HAD TO ADMIT THAT I STILL HAD MY *OWN* SUSPICIONS ABOUT MY *UNCLE EBENEZER*, AND ABOUT THE *LETTER* I HAD *BEEN CHARGED TO DELIVER* TO HIM...

SO I *FOLLOWED* ALAN'S ADVICE, AND SET FORTH INTO THE STREETS OF *QUEEN'S FERRY* IN SEARCH OF A CERTAIN *LAWYER*...

MY NAME IS *DAVID BALFOUR*, SIR. CAN YOU DIRECT ME TO THE HOUSE OF *MR. RANKEILLOR*?

THIS IS HIS HOUSE, BY SINGULAR CHANCE, AND I AM *HE*. WHERE HAVE YOU *COME FROM*, MR. BALFOUR?

I HAVE COME FROM A GREAT *MANY* PLACES, SIR, AND I THINK IT WOULD BE BEST TO *TELL* YOU OF THEM IN MORE *PRIVATE SURROUNDINGS*.

OH? INTO MY *OFFICE*, THEN... FOR I SMELL *TROUBLE* BREWING AT THE *HOUSE OF SHAWS*, WITH MR. *EBENEZER* BALFOUR RIGHT IN THE *THICK* OF IT, I DARE SAY.

AND AFTER I HAD *TOLD* HIM THE WHOLE LONG STORY...

WELL, MR. DAVID BALFOUR; THAT WAS QUITE AN *ODDYSEY* --BUT IT ENDS WITH SOME *GOOD NEWS*. AS THE LAWYER IN CHARGE OF BOTH YOUR UNCLE'S AND YOUR FATHER'S *AFFAIRS*--

--I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE DELIVERED LETTER WAS *PROOF* OF YOUR RIGHTFUL *INHERITANCE OF THE HOUSE OF SHAWS*.

NOW THAT YOUR FATHER IS DEAD, THE ESTATE IS *YOURS* RIGHT ENOUGH--BUT YOUR UNCLE *EBENEZER* WILL NO DOUBT *FIGHT* FOR IT, AND CALL YOUR IDENTITY INTO *QUESTION*.

NOW IF WE COULD GET HIM TO *ADMIT YOUR KIDNAPPING*-- *OUT OF COURT*, IF POSSIBLE, FOR A *NUMBER* OF REASONS...

FIRST, THERE IS THE *EXPENSE* OF A COURT STRUGGLE. AND THEN, IF ANY OF YOUR DEALINGS WITH YOUR *REBEL FRIEND* WERE TO COME OUT, WE'D SURELY FIND OUR *FINGERS BURNED*.

BY THE WAY, I'VE ALREADY *FORGOTTEN* THE HIGHLANDER'S *REAL NAME* AND HAVE NO DESIRE TO HEAR IT *AGAIN*. WE SHALL CALL HIM "*MR. THOMSON*" HENCEFORTH...

AND SO, I UNFOLDED ALAN'S SCHEME TO *TRAP* MY UNCLE--ATTRIBUTING IT TO "*MR. THOMSON*"--AND WHEN RANKEILLOR HAD *AGREED*...

TORRANCE, I MUST HAVE THIS *WRITTEN UP*--AND WHEN YOU'RE *DONE*, BE READY TO *ACCOMPANY* THIS GENTLEMAN AND ME TO THE *HOUSE OF SHAWS*.

ON THE WAY, AS WE PASSED ALAN'S *HIDING PLACE*, I WHISTLED THE AGREED *SIGNAL*...

AND WHEN HE EMERGED TO *JOIN US*...

MR. THOMSON, I HAVE FORGOTTEN MY *GLASSES* AND OUR FRIEND, DAVID, WILL TELL YOU I'M NEARLY *BLIND* WITHOUT THEM. SO DO NOT BE SURPRISED IF I FAIL TO *RECOGNIZE* YOU *TOMORROW*.

WHY, SIR, I DON'T THINK IT SHOULD *MATTER*. BY TOMORROW, OUR MUTUAL INTEREST SHOULD BE AT AN *END*.

AT THE HOUSE OF SHAWS, WE TOOK OUR PLACES AS ALAN SET THE SCHEME IN MOTION...

OPEN UP, EBENEZER BALFOUR--OPEN UP, I SAY!

WHAT'S THIS? THIS IS NO TIME OF NIGHT FOR DECENT FOLK AND I HAVE NO DEALINGS WITH NIGHTHAWKS! WHAT BRINGS YE HERE?

WHAT BRINGS ME HERE IS MORE OF YOUR AFFAIR THAN MINE. IT SEEMS THERE WAS A SHIP LOST NEAR THE ISLE OF MULL... AND THE NEXT DAY A GENTLEMAN OF MY FAMILY CAME UPON A LAD WHO WAS HALF-DROWNED...

HE BROUGHT THE LAD TO AND CLAPPED HIM IN AN OLD CASTLE WHERE HE HAS BEEN KEPT AT A GREAT EXPENSE. THE LAD'S NAME IS DAVID BALFOUR OF SHAWS.

AYE, AND I'VE COME TO TELL YOU THAT UNLESS YOU PAY A RANSOM FOR HIM, YOU'LL NEVER SEE YOUR NEPHEW DAVID AGAIN.

AH, WELL... I DON'T REALLY CARE. YE SEE, HE WAS NOT A GOOD LAD, AND I'VE NO CALL TO INTERFERE...

COME NOW, EBENEZER, I SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING--PRETENDING YOU DON'T CARE SO I'LL LOWER THE RANSOM SUM. BUT YOU CAN'T DESERT YOUR OWN BROTHER'S SON. WHAT IF IT CAME TO BE KNOWN?

I DON'T SEE HOW IT WOULD COME TO BE KNOWN--NOT BY ME, NOR YOU OR YOUR FRIENDS, NOT IF WE ALL KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR US...

THEN IT'LL HAVE TO BE DAVID WHO TELLS IT.

WHAT--?! HOW'S THAT?

MY FRIENDS WILL *KEEP* YOUR NEPHEW ONLY AS LONG AS THERE'S *MONEY* TO BE MADE FROM IT. AS SOON AS THEY LEARN THERE'S *NONE*, THEY'LL LET HIM *GO* WHEREVER HE *PLEASES*. YOU DON'T WANT *THAT*, DO YOU?

N-NO...! I'LL NOT BE DESIRING *THAT*!

I *THOUGHT* NOT -- NOT WHEN YOU CAN *BUY THE LAD BACK*, AND *DO* WITH HIM WHAT YOU *WILL*.

AYE -- I'M A MAN OF *PRINCIPLE*, AND IF I HAVE TO *PAY* FOR IT, I'LL *PAY*.

GOOD, NOW ABOUT THE *PRICE*... THERE'S NO USE IN *ME* SETTING A SUM. *FIRST* I HAVE TO KNOW, FOR INSTANCE, WHAT YOU PAID TO HOSEASON

HOSEASON?! WHAT WOULD I PAY *HIM* FOR -- ?!

FOR *KIDNAPPING* YOUR NEPHEW *DAVID*, OF COURSE.

IT'S A *LIE* -- A *BLACK LIE*! HE WAS *NEVER KIDNAPPED* -- *HE LIED IN HIS THROAT*! WHO *TOLD* YE THAT?! *KIDNAPPED*? HE *NEVER WAS*!

EASY, OLD MAN. YOU'RE IN NO *DANGER*. OVER IT -- NOT YET ANYWAY. *HOSEASON'S* A MAN WHO CAN BE TRUSTED...

WHAT DO YE *MEAN*? WAS IT *HOSEASON* WHO TOLD YE?

WHY, YOU *OLD RUNT*! HOW ELSE WOULD I KNOW? HOSEASON AND ME ARE *PARTNERS*, SO YOU CAN SEE WHAT GOOD *LYING* WILL DO! NOW THE POINT IN HAND IS *THIS* -- *WHAT DID YOU PAY HIM*?

HAS HOSEASON TOLD YE THE SUM *HIMSELF*?

THAT'S MY CONCERN -- BUT I WOULDN'T *LIE* IF I WERE YOU...

THE SOLEMN TRUTH IS I GAVE HIM *TWENTY POUNDS* ... BUT I'LL BE PERFECTLY *FRANK* WITH YE -- HE WAS TO HAVE THE *SALE* OF THE LAD IN *CAROLINA*, WHICH WOULD FETCH HIM *MUCH MORE*, BUT NOT FROM *MY* POCKET.

MR. RAN-KEILLOR HAD HEARD QUITE *ENOUGH*...

THANK YOU, MR. THOMSON -- THAT WAS DONE EXCEPTIONALLY *WELL*.

AND *GOOD EVENING* TO YOU, MR. *EBENEZER BALFOUR*.

HELLO, UNCLE EBENEZER.

DAVID--!! AAHH -- MY HEART!

HE WAS *STRICKEN DUMB* BY OUR SUDDEN APPEARANCE, REALIZING HE HAD BEEN TRICKED INTO A *CONFESSION BEFORE WITNESSES*.

COME, *COME*, EBENEZER, DON'T BE *SO DOWNHEARTED* -- DAVID HAS AGREED TO *QUITE REASONABLE TERMS*. HE'S WILLING TO LET YOU STAY HERE IN THE *HOUSE*, CONTENTING HIMSELF WITH A *MONETARY PROVISION*.

IN THE *MEANTIME*, GIVE US THE *CELLAR KEY* SO WE MAY DRAW US SOME *WINE* IN HONOR OF THIS EVENT.

A SHORT WHILE LATER, AS I HAD LEFT MY *FATHER'S* HOUSE FOR THE LAST TIME, I ALSO TURNED MY BACK ON THE *HOUSE OF SHAWS*...

I HAVE A *LETTER* FOR YOU, DAVID...

I HAD LITTLE WELCOME WHEN I *CAME* TO SHAWS, AND LESS *KINDNESS* WHILE I *STAYED* -- BUT AT LEAST I WAS *WATCHED* AS I *WENT AWAY*.

IT IS ADDRESSED TO MY BANKERS IN EDINBURGH, PLACING A CREDIT TO YOUR NAME. I TRUST YOU'LL BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR MONEY.

AND NOW, MR. DAVID BALFOUR, AS I SAY FARE-WELL, I WISH YOU ALL JOY IN YOUR GOOD FORTUNE, WHICH I FEEL IS WELL DESERVED.

THANK YOU, SIR--FAREWELL

ALAN AND I THEN SET OFF FOR EDINBURGH, DISCUSSING ALONG THE WAY OUR RESPECTIVE PLANS FOR THE FUTURE...

...EVEN AS I'M CERTAIN BOTH OUR HEARTS WERE DWELLING ON THE ADVENTURES WE HAD SHARED IN THE PAST.

IT WAS RESOLVED THAT ALAN SHOULD KEEP TO HIDING IN THE COUNTRY -- UNTIL SUCH TIME AS I COULD ARRANGE HIS SAFE EMBARKATION TO FRANCE, PERHAPS THROUGH THE AID OF HIS STEWART CLANSMEN...

WE CAME THEN TO A CROSSROADS WITH THE GREAT CITY IN THE DISTANCE AND WORDS SEEMED TO LEAVE US...

WE STOOD THERE FOR A TIME, AND NEITHER ONE OF US COULD LOOK OTHER IN THE FACE. ALREADY I FELT LOST AND LONESOME...

WELL, DAVID, MY FRIEND... I...

AYE, ALAN. GOODBYE... MR. RANSOM.

BUT THE JEST BROUGHT US NEARER TO TEARS THAN LAUGHTER...

AND WITH A COLD GNAWING IN MY INSIDES, LIKE REMORSE OVER SOMETHING WRONG, I TURNED MY FACE TOWARD THE CITY OF EDINBURGH...

...AND NEVER ONCE LOOKED BACK.

THE END.

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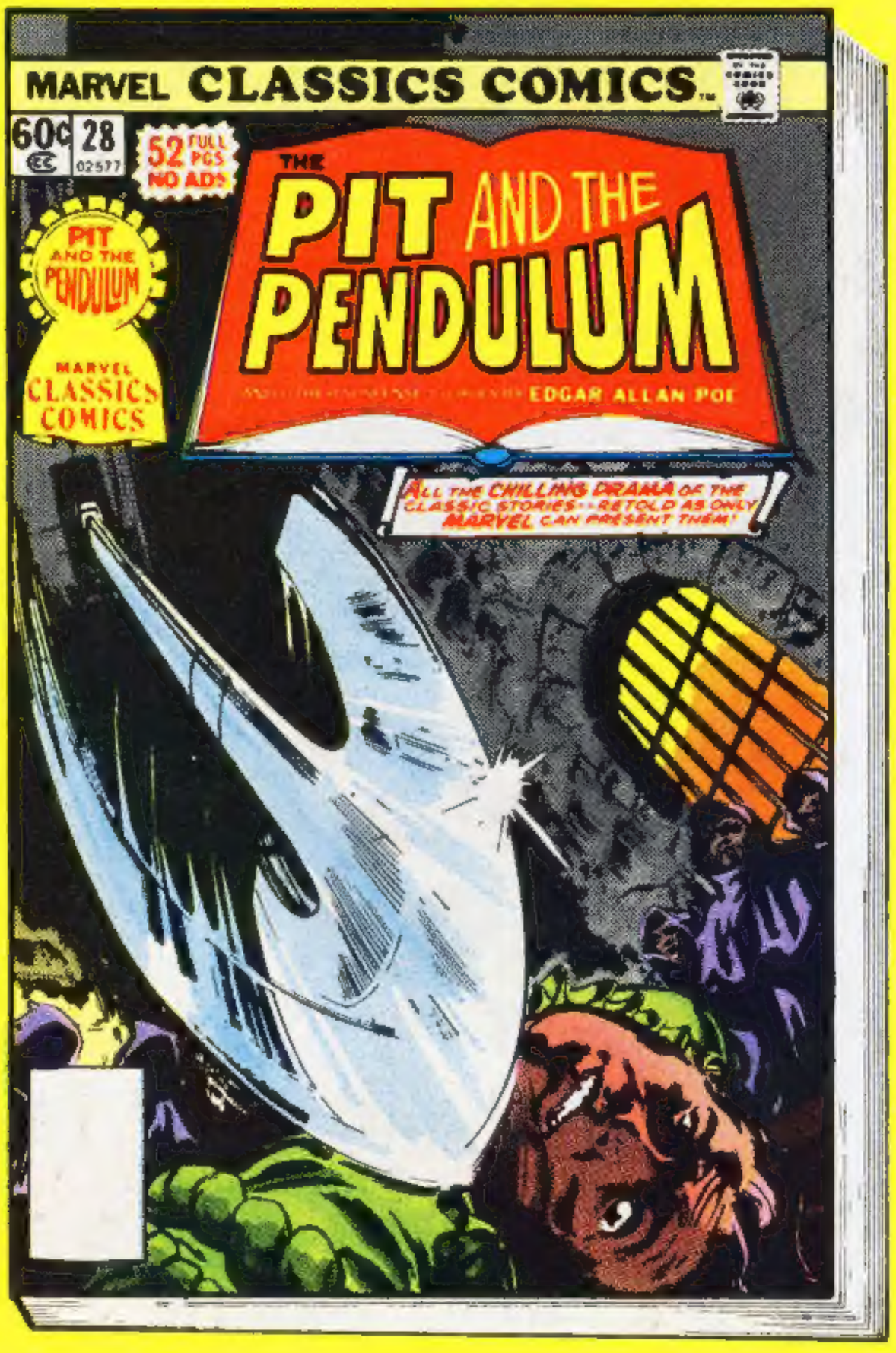
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